

**FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT  
FOR THE  
REALIGNMENT OF SOUTH TELEPHONE  
COVE ROAD, ARIZONA  
LAKE MEAD NATIONAL RECREATION AREA**

**INTRODUCTION**

The National Park Service (NPS), Lake Mead National Recreation Area (NRA), has prepared an environmental assessment (EA) that evaluates the no-action and two action alternatives related to realigning South Telephone Cove Road, within the Katherine development area of Lake Mohave, Arizona.

Lake Mead NRA is located in southeastern Nevada and northwestern Arizona. The project area is located in the southern portion of the recreation area, near Lake Mohave, just north of the Katherine Landing developed area and south of the Princess Cove Launch Ramp, in Arizona. Katherine Landing is one of the closest developed recreation areas to the cities of Laughlin, Nevada, and Bullhead City and Kingman, Arizona. It also serves as a primary recreational access point to the recreation area for boaters from California and other parts of Arizona. Katherine Landing is one of the busiest access points in the recreation area.

**PURPOSE AND NEED**

The primary purpose of this project is to improve the South Telephone Cove Road to enhance safety for users by improving the quality and longevity of the road, while protecting natural and cultural resources. An additional purpose of the project is to reduce erosion in the wash by moving portions of the roadway out of the drainage area.

The existing unpaved road to South Telephone Cove is situated in an active, sandy wash. Consequently, travel is difficult and visitors periodically get stuck in the sandy segments of the road. This contributes to unsafe and difficult travel for visitors and park employees. Inclement weather, runoff, and erosion can add to the unsafe conditions of the road. Maintenance occurs periodically on the roadway, but due to the sandy roadbed, occasional washouts, ongoing erosion, and high visitor use, the road is extremely difficult to maintain.

Several accidents have been reported on the road, and the road is subject to frequent visitor complaints. Therefore, the NPS has considered options for improving the roadway.

**ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED**

The alternatives analyzed included: Alternative A: No Action; Alternative B: Relocate Segment of Access Road to the North (management- and environmentally-preferred alternative); and Alternative C: Relocate Access Road to the South. There were no other alternatives considered for this project.

## **ENVIRONMENTALLY PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE**

The environmentally preferred alternative is the alternative that will promote NEPA, as expressed in Section 101 of NEPA. This alternative will satisfy the following requirements:

- Fulfill the responsibilities of each generation as trustee of the environment for succeeding generations;
- Assure for all generations safe, healthful, productive, and esthetically and culturally pleasing surroundings;
- Attain the widest range of beneficial uses of the environment without degradation, risk of health or safety, or other undesirable or unintended consequences;
- Preserve important historic, cultural, and natural aspects of our national heritage and maintain, wherever possible, an environment that supports diversity and variety of individual choice;
- Achieve a balance between population and resource use that will permit high standards of living and a wide sharing of life's amenities; and,
- Enhance the quality of renewable resources and approach the maximum attainable recycling of depletable resources.

Alternative B is the environmentally preferable alternative because overall it would best meet the requirements in Section 101 of NEPA. It would require only a small segment of road realignment as compared with alternative C, and promote the rehabilitation of the desert wash resource, preserving an important part of the desert environment. It would provide a safe surrounding and access to the recreational resource in an environment that supports diversity and a variety of individual choice. It would avoid damaging a population of rare plants.

## **MITIGATION AND MONITORING METHODS**

Mitigation measures are specific actions designed to minimize, reduce, or eliminate impacts of alternatives and to protect Lake Mead NRA resources and visitors.

Monitoring activities are actions to be implemented during or following construction. The following mitigation related to road construction will be implemented under each action alternative, and are assumed in the analysis of effects for each alternative.

### **Natural Resources**

#### Soils and Vegetation:

- The road has been designed to consider the topography of the area and will serve to decrease erosion and blend in with the surrounding area.

- The area will be surveyed prior to construction and appropriate plants, as determined by the NPS Resource Management Specialist, will be removed and replanted after construction.
- Vegetation salvaged from the project area will be replaced in the area after construction. The abandoned roadway will be restored after the new road is completed.
- Topsoil will be salvaged from the project area and replaced in the area to promote the reestablishment of vegetation. No imported topsoil or hay bales will be used during revegetation in an effort to avoid the introduction of exotic plant species.
- All operations will be confined to the work limits of the project. Damaged areas will be restored, repaired, and plants will be replaced.
- The construction area will be monitored after the completion of the project for the presence of exotic plant species, and control strategies will be initiated if these species occur. To prevent the introduction of and minimize the spread of exotic vegetation and noxious weeds, the following measures will be implemented:
  - Minimize soil disturbance;
  - Pressure-wash or steam clean all construction equipment before it is brought into or from other areas of the recreation area;
  - Limit vehicle parking to existing roads, parking lots, or the access route;
  - Obtain all fill, rock, or additional topsoil from the project area;
  - Initiate revegetation of all disturbed sites immediately following construction activities by spreading conserved topsoil with its associated seed bank;
  - A NPS biologist will monitor all disturbed areas for two to three years following construction to identify noxious weeds or exotic vegetation. Treat areas in accordance with NPS-13, *Integrated Pest Management Guidelines*;
  - Obtain cleaned riprap from outside the recreation area.

Water Resources: Best Management Practices are means of preventing or reducing nonpoint source pollution in the wash and of minimizing soil loss and sedimentation. Best Management Practices will be utilized to prevent run-off, minimize erosion, and prevent impacts to the wash, and will include some or all of the following, depending upon site specific requirements:

- Locating waste and excess excavated materials outside the wash to avoid sedimentation;
- Prior to construction, installing silt fences, straw bale barriers, temporary earthen berms, temporary water bars, or other equivalent measures, around the perimeter of the stockpiled fill material;
- Conducting regular site inspections throughout the construction period to ensure that erosion-control measures were properly installed and function effectively;
- Properly storing, using, and disposing of chemicals, fuels, and other toxic materials; and;
- Refueling construction equipment in upland areas only, to prevent fuel spills near water resources.

#### Air Quality:

- Dust control measures, including water sprinkling during earth-disturbing activities, will be utilized to minimize airborne particulates during construction. Low-sulfur fuel will be used where available.

#### **Cultural Resources**

- In the 1970s, the Katherine area was inventoried for cultural resources and none were found in the project area (Ervin 1986). In 2001, the management-preferred route was again inventoried for cultural resources (Svinarich 2001) and none were found in the area of potential effect (APE). Realignment of South Telephone Cove Road and associated activities will have no effect on cultural resources.
- If unknown cultural resources are uncovered during construction, work will be halted in the discovery area, the site will be secured, and the recreation area will consult according to 36 CFR 800.13 and, as appropriate, provisions of the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act of 1990. The NPS will also notify and consult concerned tribal representatives for the proper treatment of human remains, funerary objects, and sacred objects should these be discovered during the course of the project.

#### **Visual Resources**

- The road has been designed under NPS road standards and will utilize the area topography to blend in the road with the surrounding terrain.

#### **Visitor Use , Experience, and Public Safety**

- Access to South Telephone Cove will remain open during construction of the new access road. The public will be notified of activities prior to and during the construction.
- Barricades will be placed around the construction site and the construction and staging areas will be closed to the public.

#### **Worker Safety**

- The potential for flash floods exists between July and September. If project work is to occur during these months, a safety plan for working in desert washes will be formulated.

The following matrix summarizes the mitigation measures required for the selected alternative.

Impact Topic	Mitigation Required under the Preferred Alternative (Alternative B)	Responsible Party
Soils and Vegetation	<p>The area will be surveyed prior to construction and appropriate plants, as determined by the NPS Resource Management Specialist, will be removed and replanted after construction. The abandoned roadway will be restored after the new road is completed.</p> <p>Topsoil will be salvaged from the project area and replaced in the area to promote the reestablishment of vegetation.</p> <p>All operations will be confined to the work limits of the project. Damaged areas will be restored, repaired, and plants will be replaced.</p> <p>The construction area will be monitored after the completion of the project for the presence of exotic plant species, and control strategies will be initiated if these species occur. To prevent the introduction of and minimize the spread of exotic vegetation and noxious weeds, the following measures will be implemented:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Minimize soil disturbance;</li> <li>• Pressure-wash or steam clean all construction equipment before it is brought into the recreation area;</li> <li>• Limit vehicle parking to existing roads, parking lots, or the access route;</li> <li>• Obtain all fill, rock, or additional topsoil from the project area;</li> <li>• Initiate revegetation of all disturbed sites immediately following construction activities by spreading conserved topsoil with its associated seed bank;</li> <li>• A NPS biologist will monitor all disturbed areas for two to three years following construction to identify noxious weeds or exotic vegetation. Treat areas in accordance with NPS-13, <i>Integrated Pest Management Guidelines</i>;</li> <li>• Obtain cleaned riprap from outside the recreation area.</li> </ul>	Project manager and Resource Management Specialist (Restoration)

<b>Water Resources</b>	<p>Best Management Practices will be utilized to prevent run-off, minimize erosion, and prevent impacts to the wash, and will include some or all of the following, depending upon site specific requirements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Locating waste and excess excavated materials outside the wash to avoid sedimentation;</li> <li>• Prior to construction, installing silt fences, straw bale barriers, temporary earthen berms, temporary water bars, or other equivalent measures, around the perimeter of the stockpiled fill material;</li> <li>• Conducting regular site inspections throughout the construction period to ensure that erosion-control measures were properly installed and function effectively;</li> <li>• Properly storing, using, and disposing of chemicals, fuels, and other toxic materials; and</li> <li>• Refueling construction equipment in upland areas only, to prevent fuel spills near water resources.</li> </ul>	Project Manager
<b>Air Quality</b>	Dust control measures will be employed by the contractors to minimize the impacts to air quality associated with ground disturbance and construction activities. All necessary reasonable measures will be taken to reduce air pollution, including wetting down dry materials to prevent blowing dust, utilizing or removing excavated materials as soon as possible, and keeping the project neat, orderly, and in a safe condition at all times. Low-sulfur fuel will be used where available.	Project Manager
<b>Cultural Resources</b>	<p>If unknown cultural resources are uncovered during construction, work will be halted in the discovery area, the site will be secured, and the recreation area would consult according to 36 CFR 800.13 and, as appropriate, provisions of the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act of 1990.</p> <p>The NPS would notify and consult concerned tribal representatives for the proper treatment of human remains, funerary objects, and sacred objects should these be discovered during the course of the project.</p>	Cultural Resource Specialist
<b>Worker Safety</b>	If project work is to occur between July and September, a safety plan for working in desert washes will be formulated.	Project Manager
<b>Visitor Use and Experience</b>	<p>The public will be notified of activities prior to and during the construction.</p> <p>Barricades will be placed around the construction site, and the construction and staging areas will be closed to the public.</p>	Project Manager

## **ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES OF THE PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE**

Following the implementation of the mitigation and monitoring measures, the environmental consequences of implementing the preferred alternative are as follows:

### **Soils and Vegetation**

Approximately 0.89 acres of previously undisturbed desert soil and vegetation located in the 1,500-foot segment of new corridor will be modified under this alternative. The vegetative community in the area primarily consists of creosotebush-bursage. One sensitive plant species, the Ajo lily (*Hesperocallis undulata*), inhabits an area adjacent to, but not in the project site. Individual plant species and their habitat will be impacted under this alternative. Mitigation, including topsoil salvage and replacement, will help restore staging areas and other areas disturbed during construction activities.

The 2,000-foot segment of old road will be closed under this alternative, and approximately 1.2 acres will be rehabilitated. Portions of the abandoned roadway will be rehabilitated using heavy equipment and seeding to establish native vegetation. Natural seeding will occur with time over the entire abandoned roadway, and eventually, no trace of the road will be present.

Exotic plant species are likely to invade the disturbance area, and could become established in the abandoned road corridor. Mitigation and monitoring will reduce this impact.

*Cumulative Effects:* No other road construction projects are anticipated in this area, therefore, no cumulative effects will occur to vegetation and soils from park construction activities. There is some off-road vehicle use in the local area, but that is primarily from visitors trying to avoid the sandy spots on the existing road. Construction of the new road should reduce the impact from illegal off-road vehicle use.

*Conclusion:* The overall acreage that will be permanently modified under this alternative is approximately 0.89 acres. However, 1.2 acres of abandoned roadbed will be restored over time, creating a net gain of 0.31 acres of desert habitat and some beneficial effects. No impairment to soils and vegetation will occur as a result of the impacts associated with this alternative.

### **Wildlife and Wildlife Habitat**

A 0.89-acre area of wildlife habitat will be permanently modified due to the construction of the new road segment. This impact is considered negligible since it is low quality habitat located in a development zone. In addition, 1.2 acres of desert wash habitat will eventually be restored under this alternative, creating a net gain of 0.31 acres.

The disturbance associated with human activities and construction activities will temporarily disturb and displace wildlife from the area during the project work. Wildlife mortality to small mammals and reptiles could occur from the use of heavy equipment. Small wildlife dens in the new road corridor will be destroyed. There will be no change in the existing level of impacts related to wildlife/vehicle collisions.

*Cumulative Effects:* No other road construction projects are anticipated in this area, therefore, no cumulative effects will occur to wildlife and wildlife habitat from park construction activities. Continued maintenance of existing road, and vehicle traffic, and future increases in vehicle traffic is not likely to change the existing level of impacts related to wildlife/vehicle collisions.

*Conclusion:* There will be negligible to minor impacts due to disturbance associated with construction, direct mortality, and loss of habitat on the proposed realignment area. There will be no long-term negative impacts. There will be no impairment to wildlife and wildlife habitat from the impacts associated with this alternative.

#### Water Resources

The existing road will be moved out of the desert wash, and the area rehabilitated. Desert wash flood hydrology would be restored in the long-term and erosion should decrease through time. Mitigation including best management practices will prevent run-off from the construction site, therefore, there will be no impact to the water resources of South Telephone Cove and Lake Mohave from construction activities.

*Cumulative Effects:* No additional construction is planned in the Katherine Landing area, however, erosion and run-off from existing facilities, roads, and parking lots can contribute sediments and pollutants to Lake Mohave. The cumulative effect of the preferred alternative should reduce this level of impact in the vicinity of the project site.

*Conclusion:* The desert wash resource will be restored in the long-term, creating beneficial impacts to park resources. There will be no impairment to water resources based on the impacts associated with this alternative.

#### **Air Quality**

There could be a slight increase in traffic on the access road due to improved conditions, thus slightly increasing the vehicular emissions. This will be most noticeable during the summer months, when the area is operating near or at capacity. However, the impact to air quality will remain minor and localized.

There will be impacts associated from construction activities, including the use of heavy equipment, exhaust, and soil disturbance activities. Mitigation will be utilized and these impacts are expected to be minor, occurring only during construction.

*Cumulative Effects:* Air quality around Lake Mohave is affected by a variety of internal and external sources, including powerplants, motor vehicle and vessel emissions, and dust from the use of backcountry roads. Increased traffic on the roadway could lead to increased dust conditions in the immediate area. This could lead to overall increases in particulate matter in the vicinity of the project, creating minor, yet long-term adverse impacts. The road aggregate should reduce this impact. Also, winds are generally from the south during the summer, high-use months, therefore the dust should disperse to the north of Katherine Landing. There are no other construction projects planned for this area. Long distance transport of pollutants will be unaffected by this alternative.

*Conclusion:* There will be minor, localized impacts to air quality from increased use of the road, particularly during the summer months. There will be short-term minor impacts to air quality from construction activities and use of heavy equipment. No impairment to air quality will occur as a result of the impacts associated with this alternative.

### **Cultural Resources**

In 2001, this route was inventoried for cultural resources and none were found within the APE (Svinarich 2001). There will be no impact to cultural resources under this alternative.

*Cumulative Effects:* There will be no cumulative impacts to cultural resources under this alternative.

*Conclusion:* There will be no impact and no impairment to cultural resources based on the impacts associated with this alternative.

### **Soundscapes**

The project area is located in an urban park setting, and the public expects some level of human-generated noise. Existing noise sources include vehicle traffic, air traffic, and motorized vessels. Construction noises will add to that existing level of noise, however, they will be minor and short-term, occurring only during construction. Traffic noise will remain in the area with the construction of the new road segment.

*Cumulative Effects:* Human-generated noise occurs in the project area in the form of motorized vessel use, vehicular traffic, and air traffic. This will not increase under this alternative. In the long-term, noise from motorized vessels on Lake Mohave could decrease with the implementation of the *Lake Management Plan* that calls for the prohibition of two-stroke engines in 2012. Newer engine technology is reported to be quieter, and this could reduce the impacts to the soundscape from boats and other motorized vessels in the future.

*Conclusion:* Under Alternative B, there will be minor, short-term increases in noise from construction activities during construction. Other human-generated noise will continue to occur, but could be reduced after 2012, creating negligible to minor impacts and a slight measurable change. There will be no impairment to the soundscape as a result of the impacts associated with this alternative.

### **Visual Resources**

The realignment under alternative B would disturb new acreage and create a visible road on the hillside. NPS design standards will be used to blend the road with the surrounding environment. In addition, the project area is located near existing access roads to Princess Cove, North Telephone Cove, and Cabinsite Cove. Therefore, visitors have some expectation of disturbance to the visual resource. Overall, this impact should be moderate because it will result in a permanent, measurable change to the visual resource.

*Cumulative Effects:* The project area is located in a development zone with existing and expected impacts to the visual resource from buildings, roads, parking lots, and utility corridors. This alternative will remove and rehabilitate a segment of the existing road, and replace it with a new segment of road in a nearby location. Thus there will be no cumulative impact from the relocation of the access road.

*Conclusion:* This impact will result in a measurable and permanent change to the visual resource, resulting in a moderate impact. Rehabilitation of the existing road segment will reduce this impact.

### **Public Safety, Visitor Use and Experience, and Recreation Area Operations**

This alternative will improve public safety by removing a hazardous condition on the existing access road. Visitor use should increase slightly as all types of vehicles will be able to utilize the new road. The visitor experience should improve with improved access and less risk of accident. Maintenance activities on the road should return to the normal twice a year grading operation. Rangers and maintenance personnel will have less visitor assists in the area due to stuck vehicles. Overall conditions will improve.

*Cumulative Effects:* In the long-term, this alternative could result in higher use of the road and South Telephone Cove area, creating crowded conditions at the cove and shoreline area. Visitors in the Katherine area do have some expectations of crowded conditions, so visitor satisfaction is not likely to decrease.

*Conclusion:* Conditions will improve with the relocation of the road segment. Safety will improve as the road is moved out of the wash. Visitor use and experience should improve with improved access. Park operations will benefit from decreased maintenance and ranger activities in the area.

### **PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT**

Scoping for this environmental assessment was conducted through press release notifications between November 6 and December 6, 2002. No comments were received. Public notice of the availability of this environmental assessment was published in local newspapers, and on the Lake Mead NRA Internet Web site (<http://www.nps.gov/lame>). Individuals and organizations could request the environmental assessment in writing, by phone, or by e-mail. The environmental assessment was circulated to various federal and state agencies, individuals, businesses, and organizations on the park's mailing list for a 30-day public review period. Copies of the environmental assessment were also made available at area libraries. Approximately 75 copies of the EA were distributed for public review. No comment letters were received on the EA during the 30-day comment period that extended from February 11 to March 14, 2003.

## **CONSULTATIONS AND PERMITTING**

No permits are necessary in order to complete the proposed project.

The NPS has consulted with appropriate Native American groups as required by the various laws, regulations, and executive orders. A report was prepared and sent to the State Historic Preservation Office stating that no cultural resources were located in the APE and that the project will have No Effect on cultural resources. The SHPO has had no comment.

The Lake Mead NRA staff will notify and consult with concerned tribal representatives for the proper treatment of human remains, funerary, and sacred objects, should these be discovered during the course of this monitoring project.

## **BASIS FOR DECISION**

The National Park Service selects Alternative B because it will provide a safe surrounding and access to the recreational resource in an environment that supports diversity and a variety of individual choice. It will require only a small segment of road realignment and promote the rehabilitation of the desert wash resource, preserving an important part of the desert environment. As determined in the EA, road realignment can be accomplished with only minor impacts to park resources.

## **IMPAIRMENT OF PARK RESOURCES OR VALUES**

The effects of the preferred alternative will not impair park resources or values necessary to fulfill specific purposes identified in the park's enabling legislation. Impacts documented in the EA and summarized above will not affect resources or values key to the natural and cultural integrity of the park or alter opportunities for enjoyment of the park. The preferred alternative will not impair park resources and will not violate the NPS Organic Act. This conclusion is based on a thorough analysis of the impacts described in the environmental assessment, the agency and public comments received, and the professional judgment of the decision-maker in accordance with NPS *Management Policies, 2001*.

## **CONCLUSION AND BASIS FOR DETERMINATION**

Based on the analysis completed in the EA, the capability of the mitigation measures to reduce, avoid, or eliminate impacts, and with due consideration of public response, the NPS determined that there are no cumulative, indirect effects, or connected actions with the potential for significant impacts. Therefore, an environmental impact statement is not required, and the selected action may be implemented as soon as practical.

I find that the preferred alternative does not constitute a major federal action significantly affecting the quality of the human environment. Therefore, in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 and regulations of the Council on Environmental Quality (40 Code of Federal Regulations 1508.9), an environmental impact statement will not be prepared for this project.

### **Recommended:**

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William K. Dickinson, Superintendent  
Lake Mead National Recreation Area

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Date

### **Approved:**

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Jonathan B. Jarvis  
Regional Director, Pacific West Region

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Date